

NEUTRALITY
OF
THE UNITED STATES



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ADDRESS BY
HARRY B. HAWES
BEFORE
BUSINESS MEN'S LEAGUE OF ST. LOUIS
SEPTEMBER 29, 1914

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Neutrality of the United States.

GENTLEMEN :

The average American in Europe, unless studying a specialty, soon finds that in most things Americans excel. Europe has the advantage of age in art, architecture, roads and gardens, and all the disadvantages that arise from self-satisfaction, which retards initiative and improvement.

Our knowledge of foreign geography and history is limited. An American may speak but one language and be considered a well-educated man. In Europe he must speak three; he therefore knows more of his neighbor's life, history and country than we Americans.

We are praised as skilled traders, great inventors, wonderful money makers; and there praise ceases, except that our women are admired, especially those with large fortunes.

He expects us to pay more than Europeans; he has one price for the American, another for his own people.

He reads the plan of our political institutions, but remains ignorant of the fundamental principles of equality and justice upon which our government rests.

One armed military government, of necessity, causes all its neighbors to arm and maintain tremendous military establishments.

This necessity blinds him to the loss of the most useful years of a man's life, and taxation (which would bring a revolution here) becomes to him a patriotic duty.

One armed European state, by proximity, means an armed Europe.

This makes military preparedness the great test of a nation's fitness for government. So we find that the

average European, measuring us by this rule, finds our Government inefficient.

He counts his warships, numbers his army corps, and, in contemptuous comparison, finds that our standing army is smaller than the least of the states of Europe. That our volunteer armies in the Civil War actually destroyed more men in the same period of time than in any war in modern history, and the skill of the commanders of these volunteer troops, put in text-books, is used in European war schools, has not impressed him.

Our contention that the volunteer soldier, fighting for some great principle, makes a better soldier than the one drafted under state compulsion (who becomes a mere unit and ceases to be a man) causes him contemptuous amusement.

Americans Abroad.

Eliminating hearsay and reducing the accounts of returning Americans to actual facts, we find that with very rare exceptions Americans were treated kindly and courteously in France, Germany, England, Russia, Belgium and Austria.

There were inconveniences, shortage of money, disagreeable transportation and other unpleasant experiences, but not more so than the peaceful citizens of the various countries suffered themselves.

The best proof of this statement is found in the fact that Americans unconsciously absorbed the sentiment of the nation they visited. Americans in Germany came back with high praise of the German people, their army and the righteousness of their cause. Those in England and France were equally strong in recounting the praise of the people and armies of those nations.

Thus showing that in all countries they were accorded kindly, friendly consideration.

The newspapers of all the nations engaged in war are strictly censored. There is no exception. Each nation's side is set forth in most alluring manner; the alleged atrocities of the enemy are made shockingly appalling; the motive of the enemy is given at its worst, and the acts of bravery, skill of generals and self-sacrifice of their own country are depicted in a manner to impress the reader, so that he comes back to America with only one side of the story, and that side is the one absorbed by personal contact and the reading of censored news.

Most of the shocking things they relate were not witnessed by them—in fact, occurred at some distant place and invariably done by the enemy of the country visited by them.

They met some one upon a train, or they heard a story. This, without investigation or confirmation, is repeated until, by repetition, when they arrive home and find themselves American heroes and heroines, they are partisan instead of neutral.

The wholesale manufacture of American heroes and heroines in the war would be amusing, were it not for the just contempt that foreign people must have for those who complained of petty annoyances when the awful penalty of war was being paid in full measure, by destruction and death.

Of the hundred thousand Americans abroad, we are proud to note that only a very, very few found it necessary to exaggerate their small inconveniences in the face of the universal sorrow, suffering and death that makes one great graveyard of all Europe.

Duty of Neutrality.

The naturally acquired bias of returning Americans, fed on censored news, added to race prejudice and blood ties, has produced a situation in the United States of extreme delicacy and calls for thoughtful protest from Americans who would prevent this nation from becoming embroiled in war, or domestic estrangements.

All American citizens are such by birth or voluntary adoption. Their first duty and foremost obligation is to obey the laws of their country. This has been declared a neutral nation.

President Jefferson said :

“No citizen has a right to go to war of his own authority; and for what he does without right, he ought to be punished. Indeed, nothing can be more obviously absurd, than to say that all the citizens may be at war, and yet the nation at peace. It has been pretended, indeed, that the engagement of a citizen in an enterprise of this nature was a divestment of the character of citizen, and a transfer of jurisdiction over him to another sovereign. Our citizens are certainly free to divest themselves of that character by emigration, and other acts manifesting their intention, and may then become the subjects of another power, and free to do whatever the subjects of that power may do.”

The only proper place for a belligerent American is in the army or navy of a belligerent nation.

Believing in the patriotism of all classes of our people, we conclude that only ignorance of the fatal consequences of the violation of our neutrality, can occasion apprehension.

John Bassett Moore, the accepted authority in the United States on the subject of International Law, gives this definition of "neutrality":

"By the usual principles of international law, the state of **neutrality** recognizes the cause of both parties to the contest as **just**; that is, it avoids all consideration of the merits of the contest."

And again:

"The idea of a neutral nation implies two nations at war, and a third in friendship with both."

On June 18, 1895, during the Cuban insurrection, Secretary of State Olney addressed the following communication to an inquiring banker:

"I have to acknowledge the receipt of your favor of the 13th instant and to note the inquiries therein contained.

"Whether the bank or its officers could be criminally prosecuted under the neutrality laws of the United States because the bank had knowingly made itself a depository of funds contributed by sympathizers in the United States in support of the present Cuban insurrection, is a question as to which opinions may differ, and which can be satisfactorily settled only by the adjudication of the proper court. Should a bank engage in such a transaction, and, as you suggest, publish its acceptance of such a trust to the world, it would be my duty to call upon the Department of Justice to test the question whether or not the proceeding was a crime against the United States.

"It might also be my duty to suggest whether a bank holding a United States charter does not abuse its franchises and furnish ground for their for-

feiture by acts in aid of hostilities against a nation with which the United States is at peace.

“I do not anticipate, however, that anything done by your bank or its officers is likely to promote the solution of the interesting legal questions your letter presents. You ask me not merely as to your technical legal liability, but also as to your moral obligations, adding, ‘for we are all too loyal to our own country to seek to overthrow in any sense her laws.’ I heartily commend the sentiment of the quotation, and am in a position to say that your moral duty in the premises does not admit of the least question. It has been expounded by no less an authority than the Supreme Court of the United States in the following language :

“ ‘The intercourse of this country with foreign nations, and its policy in regard to them, are placed by the Constitution of the United States in the hands of the Government, and its decisions upon these subjects are obligatory upon every citizen of the Union. He is bound to be at war with the nation against which the war-making power has declared war, and equally bound to commit no act of hostility against a nation with which the Government is in amity and friendship.

“ ‘This principle is universally acknowledged by the laws of nations. It lies at the foundation of all government, as there could be no social order or peaceful relations between the citizens of different countries without it. It is, however, more emphatically true in relation to citizens of the United States. For as the sovereignty resides in the people, every citizen is a

portion of it, and is himself personally bound by the laws which the representatives of the sovereignty may pass, or the treaties into which they may enter, within the scope of their delegated authority. And when that authority has plighted its faith to another nation that there shall be peace and friendship between the citizens of the two countries, every citizen of the United States is equally and personally pledged. The compact is made by the department of the Government upon which he himself has agreed to confer the power. It is his own personal compact as a portion of the sovereignty in whose behalf it is made. And he can do no act, nor enter into any agreement to promote or encourage revolt or hostilities against the territories of a country with which our Government is pledged by treaty to be at peace, without a breach of his duty as a citizen, and the breach of the faith pledged to the foreign nation.'

"Trusting you will find the foregoing a satisfactory answer to your inquiries, and that your bank, yourself, and its other officers will proceed accordingly, I am," etc.

We observe the two definitions and the Olney letter refer to only two nations at war.

The present war includes practically the whole world. Only two of the great nations are not actively engaged, Italy and the United States, and Italy is armed and may become a participant.

Race Differences.

This leaves the United States practically the only great nation preserving a strict neutrality.

It is said that Europe divided into population according to race, is Anglo-Saxon, forty-five million; Latin, one hundred to one hundred and ten million; Teuton, including Scandinavian, one hundred million; Slav, one hundred and forty million.

These races in Europe are divided into many nations and different tongues.

In far-off Africa men are fighting, Australia is arming, Japan is at war and China uneasy, India is sending troops, Islands of the Pacific and Atlantic are making preparations.

On the North American continent, Canada (our northern neighbor) is sending money and troops, and the Latin races of South America feel the strain.

Shipping has left the sea, the mechanic the workshop, the farmer the plow, the fisherman his net.

From high in the air like evil birds of prey, from the bowels of the ocean, from the mountain and the plain, engines of war and men are hurrying to participate in the slaughter of human beings.

We alone are at peace, a neutral nation.

Our forefathers gave us the Monroe Doctrine and have opposed all entangling alliances with foreign nations. To these two policies we owe our present peace.

Our population is made up of Anglo-Saxon, Teuton, Latin and Slav; these races commingling have produced a new race, stronger and better than all others.

We are connected by art, literature and heredity with all the nations of Europe. Some of our newer citizens have the closer tie of immediate kinship with those engaged in the world war. For these we must be most sympathetic and forbearing, as their trial is extreme.

Futility of Partisanship.

But no man is justified in doing aught to mar the neutrality of our country. There can be no justification for such action, and reflection will convince him of its practical futility.

There are fifteen million men engaged in the war, which costs \$55,000,000 a day.

Suppose some one could send one hundred thousand men and \$5,000,000 to the army of his choice! Can he seriously believe it would change the result?

We must wait until the war is over to find the cause and write the history. False reports will not change the fighting strength or decide a battle.

Contrabands of War.

An excited citizen hears that horses are sent to one army; another that wheat and grain can not be sent to another. He blames the Government and discusses the question of contrabands of war.

He probably does not know that various neutral European nations, such as Holland, Denmark, Sweden and Switzerland are doing the same thing.

Authorities on international law confirm President Grant's proclamation of neutrality of August 22, 1870, during the Franco-German war, in which he expressly declared that "all persons" might "lawfully and without restriction, by reason of the aforesaid state of war, manufacture and sell within the United States arms and munitions of war and other articles ordinarily known as 'contraband of war,' subject to the risk of hostile capture on the high seas."

This means that all such articles are sold at the owner's risk of capture and confiscation by one of the belligerents.

Our courts have held, "Neutrals in their own country may sell to belligerents whatever belligerents choose to buy. The principal exception to this rule is that neutrals must not sell to one belligerent what they refuse to sell to the other."

Contributions of Money.

It is not a violation of neutrality for a private citizen, or corporation, to lend money to a belligerent if made for purely commercial purposes, but it would be an infringement if the loan was in fact a gratuitous contribution.

So delicate is our position among so many friends that the President has advised against even commercial loans.

During the Franco-German war large sums of money were sent by German sympathizers to Germany for hospital purposes, and large sums were sent by sympathizers with France for the relief of persons in French hospitals, and such assistance was not considered a violation of neutrality.

Since that time the organization of the American Red Cross Society provides a means of contribution for hospital assistance, which completely eliminates any question of the violation of neutrality.

This organization will help the wounded and destitute of all the warring nations equally, and prevent offense being given to any friendly nation on the ground of partiality.

Presidential Advice.

It has been held that,

"the Executive of the United States has no authority to take cognizance of individual opinions and the manifestations thereof, even when taking the shape of revolutionary and seditious expressions

directed against our own Government;" and that it was "no less incompetent to pass upon the subversive character of utterances alleged to contravene the laws of another land."

But he may advise, as did President Cleveland, even when our feelings were outraged by the cruelties committed in Cuba:

"Whatever may be the traditional sympathy of our countrymen as individuals with a people who seem to be struggling for larger autonomy and greater freedom, deepened as such sympathy naturally must be in behalf of our neighbors, yet the plain duty of their government is to observe in good faith the recognized obligations of international relationship. The performance of this duty should not be made more difficult by a disregard on the part of our citizens of the obligations growing out of their allegiance to their country, which should restrain them from violating as individuals the neutrality which the nation of which they are members is bound to observe in its relations to friendly sovereign states."

Or as did President Roosevelt during the Japanese-Russian war:

"All officials of the Government, civil, military and naval, are hereby directed not only to observe the President's proclamation of neutrality in the pending war between Russia and Japan, but to abstain from either action or speech which can legitimately cause irritation to either of the combatants. The Government of the United States represents the people of the United States, not only in the sincerity with which it is endeavoring to keep

the scales of neutrality exact and even, but in the sincerity with which it deplores the breaking out of the present war, and hopes that it will end at the earliest possible moment and with the smallest possible loss to those engaged. Such a war inevitably increases and inflames the susceptibilities of the combatants to anything in the nature of an injury or slight by outsiders. Too often combatants make conflicting claims as to the duties and obligations of neutrals, so that even when discharging these duties and obligations with scrupulous care it is difficult to avoid giving offense to one or the other party. To such unavoidable causes of offense, due to the performance of national duty, there must not be added any avoidable causes. It is always unfortunate to bring Old-World antipathies and jealousies into our life, or by speech or conduct to excite anger or resentment toward our nation in friendly foreign lands; but in a Government employe, whose official position makes him in some sense the representative of the people, the mischief of such action is generally increased. A strong and self-confident nation should be peculiarly careful not only of the rights, but of the susceptibilities of its neighbors; and nowadays all the nations of the world are neighbors one to the other. Courtesy, moderation and self-restraint should mark international, no less than private, intercourse."

If admonition to our citizens were justified then, how much more important, how much more vital, is such an admonition now?

In the last case only two friendly nations were at war. At the present time, six great nations, all friendly to us, are at war.

Race Discussions.

We can not fail to discuss the great war's progress; it is asking too much of human nature not to do so.

The average American takes sides in a dog fight, in a prize fight, in a baseball contest, in a yacht race. How can he well refrain from having an opinion on the causes and probable outcome of the greatest tragedy in the world's history?

Experts say the war will be long; we know it will be deadly. It grips the imagination in a hold too strong to resist; we can not fail to think of it; we must talk of it!

This can be done without making race the vital issue and stirring animosities of nationality that bring bitter personal enmities.

We hear of the Frenchman who shoots the doctor who says he has German measles. We hear one man say he will use no more English mustard; another will drink no French wine; a third will eschew or not chew Vienna sausage; a fourth puts the ban on Russian caviar; a fifth will not use Italian olive oil, because he doubts Italy's strict neutrality, and a sixth is suspicious of the neutrality of Swiss cheese.

A lady will not buy French bonnets; another, German toys, and yet another will not use Irish linen.

When will the belligerent American stop? Only when the deserved ridicule which he brings upon himself becomes more unbearable than neutrality.

One ever-present danger to our nation comes from the professional sectionist, the professional race leader who appoints himself spokesman for a section or a nationality that he may gain political office or personal profit.

This professional agitator does more harm than war or disaster, as he spreads enmities and bitterness in a nation when all should be at peace and distracts atten-

tion from serious problems of Government demanding solution.

When exhaustion brings prospects of peace, a neutral nation will be asked to conciliate. Our President is the most available man for this delicate task. If our strict neutrality is under suspicion, one of the belligerents may refuse his assistance and a great opportunity for peace will be lost.

God With Peace.

Each leader of the nations at war claims God's approval of his armies and engines of destruction.

We prefer to believe that God is with our President when he counsels neutrality and advocates peace.

This is his advice :

"The United States must be neutral in fact as well as in name during these days that are to try men's souls. We must be impartial in thought as well as in action, must put a curb upon our sentiments as well as upon every transaction that might be construed as a preference of one party to the struggle before another. My thought is of America. I am speaking, I feel sure, the earnest wish and purpose of every thoughtful American that this great country of ours, which is, of course, the first in our thoughts and in our hearts, should show herself in this time of peculiar trial a nation fit beyond others to exhibit the fine poise of undisturbed judgment, the dignity of self-control, the efficiency of dispassionate action, a nation that neither sits in judgment upon others nor is disturbed in her own counsels and which keeps herself fit and free to do what is honest and disinterested and truly serviceable for the peace of the world."

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